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RUEH AR/AMEMBASSY ACCRA 2039  
RUEH DS/AMEMBASSY ADDIS ABABA 2160  
RUEH RL/AMEMBASSY BERLIN 0702  
RUEH BY/AMEMBASSY CANBERRA 1437  
RUEH DK/AMEMBASSY DAKAR 1795  
RUEH KM/AMEMBASSY KAMPALA 2216  
RUEH NR/AMEMBASSY NAIROBI 4647  
RUEA IIA/CIA WASHDC  
RUZEJAA/JAC MOLESWORTH RAF MOLESWORTH UK  
RHMFISS/EUCOM POLAD VAIHINGEN GE  
RHEFDIA/DIA WASHDC  
RUEHGV/USMISSION GENEVA 1302  
RHEHAAA/NSC WASHDC

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 HARARE 000494

SIPDIS

AF/S FOR S. HILL  
ADDIS ABABA FOR USAU  
ADDIS ABABA FOR ACSS  
STATE PASS TO USAID FOR E. LOKEN AND L. DOBBINS  
STATE PASS TO NSC FOR SENIOR AFRICA DIRECTOR B. PITTMAN

E.O. 12958: DECL: 06/06/2018  
TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [ASEC](#) [PHUM](#) [KDEM](#) [ZI](#)  
SUBJECT: RETALIATION AGAINST MDC ACTIVISTS, CANDIDATES FOR  
U.S. EMBASSY VISIT

REF: HARARE 493

Classified By: Ambassador James McGee for reason 1.4(d).

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SUMMARY  
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¶1. (C) Four women, one man and three children under the age of two were arrested and three homes were raided in Bindura after a visit by American and British diplomats on June 5. About six hours after the June 5 visit, a female MDC Councilor and an MDC activist were arrested at the Councilor's residence - also home to approximately 50 displaced people. In an early morning raid on June 6, three women - wives of MDC activists in hiding - were arrested along with their breastfeeding children. These events reflect the level of intimidation and harassment that some police - at the instigation of ZANU-PF party officials - are carrying out in Zimbabwe. The atmosphere of fear has permeated every crevice of Zimbabwean society. MDC members' ability to live peacefully, much less campaign has been completely eliminated in some areas. END SUMMARY.

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"If a dog bites you...kill it."  
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¶2. (C) On June 5, U.S. and UK Embassy staff visited MDC candidates and activists in Bindura, Mashonaland Central - about 80km north of Harare (Ref). In Bindura, Embassy staff visited the homes of two MDC officials: first Peter Mabika, MDC's MP candidate for the area who lost in the March 29 election, and then Shonai Shikirivhawu, the Councilor for Ward 7. During the first visit, Mabika welcomed Mission staff and reported that over 1,000 people in Bindura had been affected by ZANU-PF sponsored violence and that some 56 activists had been arrested and were in Bindura prison. (NOTE: UN maps dated May 27 show no/no reports of political violence or internally displaced people in Bindura District. END NOTE.) Mabika reported he was sheltering family members

and others who had been displaced by ruling party thugs and intelligence officers who had burned down worker compounds on numerous farms in rural Bindura. Mabika reported that in most cases victims knew the perpetrators, who were usually members of the security forces in Harare and who had been redeployed to their home areas for the pre-run-off period. Mabika also noted that while there was still enough food in urban areas following the recent harvest, in rural Bindura people were already going hungry. Mabika encouraged the visiting diplomats to report to the local police station and announce their presence in order to reduce the threat to local MDC members and their families, whom he noted had been increasingly targeted by ZANU-PF. When asked if he would now vote for ZANU-PF, in light of the escalating violence and intimidation, Mabika's father-in-law, who had had his own home destroyed by the party, said: "If a dog bites you, does that mean you want that dog? No! You want to kill it."  
(NOTE: On the way to the police station the staff observed a second house that they had intended to visit and stopped there before arriving at the police station. END NOTE.)

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"I'll be beaten to death..."  
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13. (C) At the second house in Bindura town, this one belonging to recently elected MDC Councilor Shonai Shikirivhawu, who had MDC posters posted on the gate outside her home despite the tense political environment. Shikirivhawu reported that she was housing some 50 farm

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workers and their families that had been displaced by the burning of farm compounds. (NOTE: None of the 50 farm workers were present at the time of the visit; the Councilor noted that most went into the suburbs during the day seeking work. END NOTE.) Shikirivhawu stated that 75 families had been impacted by the violence on one farm alone and that they were in need of supplies to assist all the victims. She and Precious Karima, another female activist who lived next door, stated that they were not afraid of ZANU-PF and did not expect them to invade the home, despite telling us that some thugs would occasionally taunt the residents and throw stones at the house at night. Nonetheless, Precious noted that although they were stalwart MDC supporters, they remained cautious in the post-electoral period: "If I put on an MDC T-shirt, I'll be beaten to death these days."

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"Searching for weapons the Americans left..."  
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14. (C) Peter Mabika, Philip Mabika (MDC's chief election agent for Bindura), and Gilbert Kagodora (MDC's treasurer for Mashonaland Central) came to the Embassy on the morning of June 6 to report the aftermath of the Embassy visit. Peter Mabika said that five minutes after the diplomatic vehicles departed his home (approximately 10:00 am), two riot police trucks - with nine police in each - began to drive up and down his street. Thirty minutes later, police from one truck ransacked his house and an adjacent house. Embassy staff never visited the adjacent house, which is home to three MDC activists currently in hiding, leaving their wives and a total of five children. The police were "looking for weapons the Americans had left" and vowed to return after their search failed to yield any weapons. Peter says the police continued surveillance throughout the night.

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Breastfeeding Women and Infants Jailed  
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15. (C) At 5:00 am on June 6, the houses were raided by 12 armed men - a combination of anti-riot police, law and order police, and Central Intelligence Officers - according to Peter Mabika. The police forced entry into the home where

the three women and their children are staying. They took the women - each with a child breastfeeding (ages two months, 6 months, and two years) - to the police station. They left two other young children ages five and three. Police say they will not release the women until their husbands come to get them. Peter had already fled his own home, and only two teenage girls were there to look after them. The two teenagers and the other young children took shelter with other family friends and are confirmed safe. All three men are extremely concerned for these women and the treatment they are currently enduring in jail. They believe they are being questioned under extreme duress. They are seeking a lawyer from Zimbabwe to go to Bindura today.

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MDC Councilor arrested, Home Raided, Dozens Displaced - Again  
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16. (C) In addition, MDC Councilor Shikirivhawu's home was ransacked by 12 armed men and she was arrested at about 04:00 or 05:00 on June 6. Peter Mabika said it was the same group that had raided his home the morning of June 6. It was at Shikirivhawu's residence that police first confronted Embassy personnel questioning their visit (reftel). Police also arrested another MDC activist who organized activities on a nearby farm before being displaced. Mabika stated that he was in regular contact with Precious Karima, who had not been

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arrested, and that she planned to try to get to Harare with her baby in order to secure her safety. Police did not explain the motive for their search or the two arrests. Kagodora believes that ZANU-PF candidate Theresa Mutandadzi, who lost her seat as Bindura Ward 2 Councilor on March 29, played a significant role in coordinating the police attacks in Bindura and on the diplomatic convoy. He also believes that the displaced families are now sleeping in the bush, as safe houses are no longer safe. (NOTE: June is the coldest month in Zimbabwe, with nighttime temperatures reaching freezing. END NOTE.)

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Police Controlled by ZANU  
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17. (C) Kagodora went on to explain that the police in Mashonaland Central are "normal" when they do not have "ZANU guys" instigating them. He said that when ZANU-PF is not around, the police communicate normally, but that they change when they are under the thumb of ZANU-PF leaders. While MDC candidates need to request police permission (which is almost always denied) to hold rallies and meetings, the ZANU-PF leadership simply holds meetings without telling police, much less asking permission. Not surprisingly, this has completely prevented MDC from campaigning. Kagodora opined that in urban and periurban communities, this will only have a negative impact on ZANU-PF at the ballot box, as people there are more educated and informed of the ZANU-PF-organized intimidation campaign. However, he feels that on rural farms where people are only seeing the ZANU-PF rallies and campaigns, voters may vote for ZANU-PF in the June 27 runoff. ZANU-PF, he said, is the only way to communicate now. Mabika, who lost his MP candidacy to ZANU-PF strong-man Eliot Manyika, believes Manyika is controlling these attacks and exerts significant control over the area's security forces.

18. (C) Kagodora compared the current situation to the janjaweed in Sudan. He went on to justify his position. The state is arming militias that are attacking citizens. Police are powerless to act independently. Tens of thousands have been displaced and have no food or shelter. The victims of political violence are routinely arrested - as if they were the criminals.

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COMMENT

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19. (C) The ongoing attacks on MDC activists and candidates continue unabated, with election day just three weeks away. The coordination of these raids and arrests reveals that intimidation and violence continue to be highly organized and approved by Zimbabwean authorities at high levels. On Thursday June 6 the Government of Zimbabwe (GOZ) shut down activities of all NGOs, further reducing the number of outsiders in rural areas that could serve witness to this kind of intimidation, illegal raiding, and unjustified arrest (reftel). Any illusion of a free and fair election is now gone, as the GOZ has proven that they are willing to pull out all the stops to intimidate their citizens and achieve a victory at the ballot box. END COMMENT.

McGee